# presentationzen

Simple Ideas on Presentation Design and Delivery

3

**Garr Reynolds**

FOREWORD BY GUY KAWASAKI

New Riders

VOICES THAT MATTER™

## Praise for *Presentation Zen: Simple Ideas on Presentation Design and Delivery,* Third Edition

"It's often the slim books that have the most impact. Strunk and White for proper English. *Robert's Rules of Order* for running meetings. Both deceptively short, with huge impact. To these I find it easy to add *Presentation Zen* for moving an audience. Embrace this wonderful guide and gain the power of crafting simple and clear messages. Garr Reynolds provides techniques and examples in a manner that, quite naturally, adheres to the same principles as what he teaches."

—**Ric Bretschneider**, Senior Program Manager, Microsoft PowerPoint Development Team 1993–2010

"Garr is a beacon of hope for frustrated audiences everywhere. His design philosophy and fundamental principles bring life to messages and can invigorate careers. His principles of simplicity are as much a journey of the soul as they are restraint of the mouse."

—**Nancy Duarte**, Principal, Duarte, Inc., and author of *Resonate* and *DataStory*

"*Presentation Zen* changed my life and the lives of my clients. As a communications specialist, I was searching for a way to create visuals that support the narrative without detracting from the story. The philosophy and approach so elegantly explained in Garr's book will inspire your audience. Don't even think of giving another presentation without it!"

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—**Daniel H. Pink**, author of *Drive* and *A Whole New Mind*

"Four years ago, Garr's *Presentation Zen* literally changed the world of communications. Almost overnight, what was once fluffy, stale, and boring became sharp, brisk, and even (can we say it?) fun. A million radically-improved speeches later, the world is ready for a refresher—and just when we need it most, Garr delivers the magic again."

—**Dan Roam**, author of *Draw To Win* and *The Back of the Napkin*

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New Riders

**Garr Reynolds**

# Presentation Zen: Simple Ideas on Presentation Design and Delivery
# Third Edition

**Garr Reynolds**

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www.newriders.com

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To Mom & Dad

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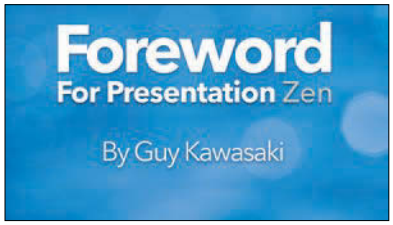
And, of course, my biggest supporter in all this was my wife, who was always understanding and a great source of inspiration and ideas. To my children: You are the reason I want to wake up every morning. To our dog Chappy and two cats, Luke and Kona: You are the persistent alarm clocks that actually get me up!

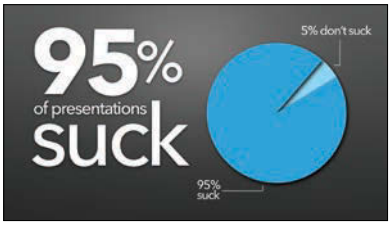
# Foreword by Guy Kawasaki

Because this is a book about presenting better with visuals, I thought it would be appropriate to show the foreword as a slide presentation. As far as I know, this is the first foreword in history presented in a book as a series of presentation slides. Now, good slides should *enhance* a live talk; slides are not meant to tell the whole story without you there. But from the slides on the next page, I think you can get my point. If I were to give a live talk about why you should buy this book, the slides would look something like this.

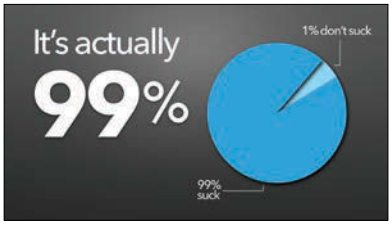
**Guy Kawasaki**
Author of *Wise Guy: Lessons from a Life.*
Chief evangelist for Canva
and former chief evangelist for Apple.

*www.guykawasaki.com*


Foreword
For Presentation Zen
By Guy Kawasaki


95%
of presentations
suck
5% don't suck
95% suck

Just
kidding...

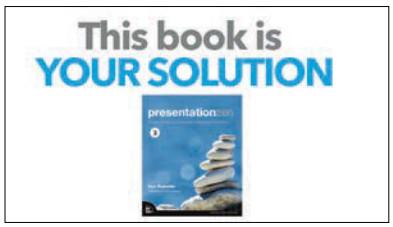

It's actually
99%
1% don't suck
99% suck

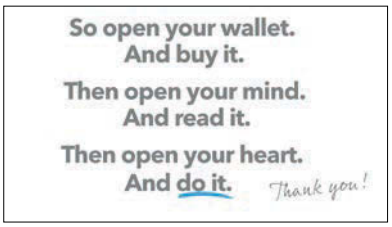
Why?

What we see
Long
Boring
Bad slides
Content-free

What we want to see
Short
Simple
Visual
Engaging

but...
Houston, we
have a problem!


This book is
YOUR SOLUTION
presentation zen


So open your wallet.
And buy it.
Then open your mind.
And read it.
Then open your heart.
And do it.
Thank you!

# introduction

**Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.**

**—Leonardo da Vinci**

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# 1

# Presenting in Today's World

With successful presentations in Tokyo behind me, I boarded the 5:03 p.m. Super Express bound for Osaka complete with my *ekiben* (a special kind of Japanese lunch box or *bento* sold at train stations) and a bottle of green tea in hand. The quintessential Japan experience for me is zipping through the Japanese countryside aboard cutting-edge rail technology while sampling traditional delicacies with my chopsticks, sipping Japanese tea, and catching glimpses of temples, shrines, and even Mount Fuji outside the spacious side window. It's a wonderful juxtaposition of the old and the new—and a pleasant way to end the day.

While in the midst of exploring the contents of my bento, I glanced across the aisle to see a Japanese businessman with a pensive look on his face as he reviewed a printed deck of presentation slides. Two slides per page, one page after another filled with boxes crammed with reams of text in several different colors. No empty space. No graphics except for the company logo at the top of each slide box. Just slide after slide of text, subject titles, and bullet points.

Were these slides the visual support for a live oral presentation? If so, I sympathized with the audience. Since when can an audience read and listen to someone talk at the same time (even if they could actually see the 12-point text on the screen well enough to read it)? Were the slides used merely as a kind of document printed in presentation software? If so, I pitied both the author and the reader because presentation software is not a good tool for document creation. Boxes of bullet points and logos do not make for a good handout or report. And judging by the way the man flipped back and forth between the printed slides, perhaps frustrated by the ambiguity of the content, this was becoming apparent to him.

What a contrast in the presentation of content, I thought to myself: The beautifully efficient, well-designed Japanese bento before me containing nothing superfluous, compared with the poorly designed, difficult-to-understand deck of printed PowerPoint slides across the aisle. Why couldn't the design and presentation of business and technical content for a live talk

have more in common with the spirit of the simple bentos sold at Japanese train stations? For example, the Japanese bento contains appropriate content arranged in the most efficient, graceful manner. The bento is presented in a simple, beautiful, and balanced way. Nothing lacking. Nothing superfluous. Not decorated, but wonderfully designed. It looks good, and it *is* good. A satisfying, inspiring, and fulfilling way to spend 20 minutes. When was the last time you could say the same about a presentation you saw?

A delicious Japanese bento and a slide presentation may seem to have nothing in common. But it was at that moment, rolling across Japan at 200 miles an hour many years ago, that I had a realization: Something needed to be done to end the scourge of bad presentation slides and the lifeless narration that accompanies them—and I could do something to help. In Japan, just like everywhere else in the world, professionals suffer through poorly designed presentations on a daily basis. Presentations in which the slides often do more harm than good. It is not enjoyable, and it is not effective. I knew that if I could begin to help others look at preparation, design, and delivery of so-called "slide presentations" in a different way, perhaps I could do my small part to help others communicate far more effectively. That moment on the Bullet Train—somewhere between Yokohama and Nagoya—was when I began writing the first edition of this book. I started by sharing my thoughts on the Presentation Zen website (www.presentationzen.com), a blog that would go on to become the world's most visited site on presentation design.

This book has three sections: Preparation, Design, and Delivery. Along the way, I'll provide a good balance of principles and concepts, inspiration, and practical examples. I'll even show you before-and-after photos of the actual bento box that was the inspiration for this book. Before reviewing the current state of presentations today—and why presentations matter now more than ever before—let's first look at what is meant by Presentation Zen.

# The Presentation Zen Approach

This is not a book about Zen. This is a book about communication and about seeing presentations in a different way, a way that is in tune with our times. Although I make several references to Zen and the Zen arts along the way, my references are far more in the realm of an analogy rather than the literal. Literally, the tradition of Zen or Zen practice has little to do directly with the art of presenting in today's world. However, our professional activities—especially professional communications—can share the same ethos as Zen. That is, the essence or the spirit of many principles found in Zen concerning aesthetics, mindfulness, connectedness, and so on can be applied to our daily activities, including presentations.

A teacher of one who seeks enlightenment would say that the first step for the student is to truly see that life is somehow out-of-sync or off-kilter, that there is suffering if you will. And that this "out-of-kilterness" is a consequence of our own attachment to things that are inconsequential. Likewise, the first step to creating and designing great presentations is to be mindful of the current state of what passes for "normal" presentations and that what is normal today is off-kilter with how people actually learn and communicate.

Each situation is different. But we all know, through our own experiences, that presentations in business and school can cause a good degree of "suffering" for audiences and presenters alike. If we want to communicate with more clarity, integrity, beauty, and intelligence, then we must move beyond what is considered to be normal to something different and far more effective. The principles I am most mindful of through every step of the presentation process are restraint, simplicity, and naturalness: Restraint in preparation. Simplicity in design. Naturalness in delivery. All of which, in the end, lead to greater clarity for us and for our audiences.

In many ways, few of the basics have changed since the time of Aristotle some 2,300 years ago or from the basic advice given by Dale Carnegie in the 1930s. But what may seem like common sense regarding presentations is not common practice. The Presentation Zen approach challenges the conventional wisdom of making presentations in today's world—especially those given with the aid of projected slides—and encourages people to think differently about the design and delivery of their presentations.

## An Approach, Not a Method

Presentation Zen is an approach, not a method. Method implies a step-by-step, systematic, planned, and linear process. Method suggests a definite and proven procedure that you can pick off a shelf and follow from A to Z in a logical, orderly fashion. As an approach, Presentation Zen suggests a road, a direction, a frame of mind—perhaps even a philosophy—but not a formula of proven rules to be followed by all in the same way. There are no panaceas for improving your presentations, and I offer no prescriptions for success. Success depends on *you* and your own unique situation. However, I do offer guidelines and some things to think about that may run contrary to conventional wisdom on how to make live presentations with multimedia.

Zen itself is an approach to life and a way of being rather than a set of rules or dogma to be followed by all in the same way. Indeed, there are many paths to enlightenment. At the heart of Zen is the need for personal awareness and the ability to see and discover. Zen is practical. It's concerned with the here and now. And the practical and the here and now are also our concerns with presentations. The aim of this book is to help professionals free themselves from the pain of creating and delivering presentations by helping them see presentations in a way that is different, simpler, more visual, more natural, and ultimately far more meaningful.

## Each Case Is Different

Not all presentation situations are appropriate for using multimedia (projected slides). For example, if you have a small audience and data-intensive materials to discuss, a handout of the materials with a give-and-take discussion is usually more appropriate. In many situations, a whiteboard, flipcharts, or a paper with detailed figures would make for better support. Each case is different. The discussions in this book largely center on those presentations for which multimedia *is* a good fit for your unique situation, but many of the principles can be applied to your situation whether you use technology or not.

This book is not directly about software tools. Yet, by keeping principles such as restraint and simplicity in mind, you can use the lessons here to help you design better visuals that are appropriate to a given situation. When it comes to software functions, I don't think the challenge is to learn more, but rather to ignore more so that you can focus on the principles and the few techniques that are important. Software techniques are simply not our chief concern.

Characterizing master swordsman Odagiri Ichiun's ideas on technique, Zen scholar Daisetz T. Suzuki says, "The first principle of the art is not to rely on tricks of technique. Most swordsmen make too much of technique, sometimes making it their chief concern." Many presenters, however, make the software their chief concern in the preparation process and delivery. This often produces cluttered visuals and talks that are neither engaging nor memorable.

Yes, the basics of software are important to know. Delivery techniques and "do's and dont's" are useful to understand. But it's not about technique alone. The art of presentation transcends technique and enables an individual to remove walls and connect with an audience—to inform or persuade in a very meaningful, unique moment in time.

*Presentation Zen can be achieved at the whiteboard as well. The key is to prepare well, make it visual, and engage your audience.*

*For larger audiences, multimedia can be a great amplifier of our message, but connection and engagement are essential.*

# Presentations Today

It seems that computer-generated slide presentations have been around forever, but in truth they've only been in common use for about 30 to 35 years. PowerPoint 1.0 was created in Silicon Valley in 1987 by Robert Gaskins and Dennis Austin as a way to display presentations on a Mac. It was cool. And it worked. They sold the application later that year to Microsoft. A version for Windows hit the market a couple years later, and (oy vey!) the world hasn't been the same since. As popular author Seth Godin—who's seen more bad presentations than any man should be subjected to—says in his 2001 e-book *Really Bad PowerPoint* (the best-selling e-book of that year): "PowerPoint could be the most powerful tool on your computer, but it's not. It's actually a dismal failure. Almost every PowerPoint presentation sucks rotten eggs."

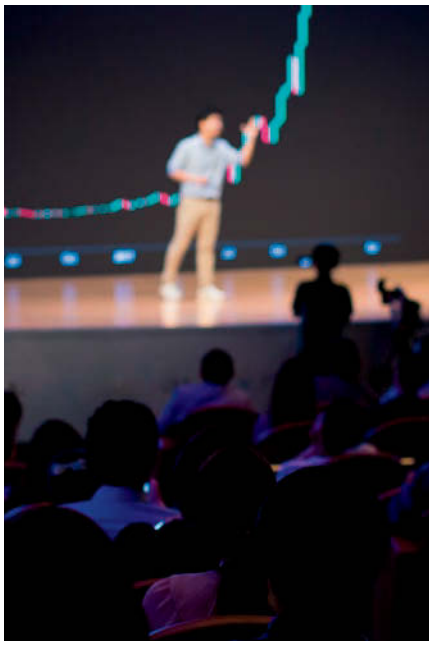
Over the years, a primary reason so many presentations given with the aid of slides or other multimedia failed is that the visual displays served as nothing more than containers for reams of text. According to John Sweller, who developed the cognitive load theory in the 1980s, it is more difficult to process information if it is coming at us both verbally and in written form at the same time. Because people cannot read and listen well at the same time, displays filled with lots of text must be avoided. On the other hand, multimedia that displays visual information, including visualizations of quantitative information, *can* be processed while listening to someone speak about the visual content.

Most of us know intuitively that when given 20 minutes to present, using screens full of text does not work. Would it be better, then, to remain silent and let people read the slides? But this raises another question: Why are you there? A good oral presentation is different from a well-written document, and attempts to merge them result in poor presentations and poor documents, as I explain later in this book.

## Still a Long Way to Go

While presentation technology has evolved over the years, the presentations themselves have not necessarily evolved. Today, millions of presentations are given every day with the aid of such applications as PowerPoint, Keynote (from Apple Inc.), or one of the host of good cloud-based applications. Yet, most presentations remain mind-numbingly dull, something to be endured by both presenter and audience alike, or heavily decorated and animated affairs with excessive motion that distracts from even well-researched content. Presentations are still generally ineffective, not because presenters lack intelligence or creativity, but because they have learned bad habits and they lack awareness and knowledge about what makes for a great presentation.

Although presentation techniques have changed as digital technology has progressed, the fundamentals of what makes an effective presentation today are essentially the same as they ever were. The principles of restraint, simplicity, and naturalness are still key, regardless of what software you use—and even if you use no digital tools at all. And no matter how much we use software in a live presentation, as much as possible the tools and techniques must be used only to clarify, simplify, and support the personal connection that develops between an audience and a speaker. The latest tools and technology can be great enablers and amplifiers of our messages, but they must be used wisely and with restraint in a way that feels natural and real, otherwise they become barriers to communication.



No matter how impressive technology becomes in the future, no matter how many features and effects are added, the technology of the soul has not changed. Technologies are only useful to the degree that they make things clearer and more memorable, and strengthen the human-to-human connection that is the basis of communication. Used well, multimedia has the power to do this.

# Presentation Generation

The ability to stand and deliver a powerful presentation that engages each audience member's whole mind has never been more important than today. Some have called our modern era the "presentation generation." One reason that the ability to speak passionately, clearly, and visually is more important today than ever before is the fantastic reach our talks can have, largely thanks to the power of online video. What you say and what you present visually can now be captured easily and cheaply in HD video and broadcast around the world for anyone to see. The potential of your speech or presentation to change things—maybe even change the world—goes far beyond just the words spoken. Words are important; but if it was only about words, we could create a detailed document, disseminate it, and that would be that. An effective presentation allows us to amplify the meaning of our words.

While speaking about the power of online video to spread innovative ideas at the TED Global conference in Oxford, England, in 2010, TED Curator Chris Anderson spoke of the great power of face-to-face communication and presentations to influence change. Anderson underscored the fact that information usually can be taken in faster by reading—but a necessary depth and richness is often missing. Part of the effectiveness of a presentation is the visual impact and the show-and-tell aspect of it. The presentation visuals, the structure, and the story are compelling aspects of a presentation, even a recorded presentation that is put up on the Web. However, as Anderson says, there is much more to it than that:

> *"There's a lot more being transferred than just words. It is in that nonverbal portion that there's some serious magic. Somewhere hidden in the physical gestures, the vocal cadence, the facial expressions, the eye contact, the passion.... There are hundreds of subconscious clues that go to how well you will understand and whether you are inspired."*

We are wired for face-to-face communication, Anderson says. "Face-to-face communication has been fine-tuned by millions of years of evolution. That's what's made it into this mysterious powerful thing it is. Someone speaks, and there is resonance in all these receiving brains. [Then] the whole group acts together. This is the connective tissue of the human super organism in action. It has driven our culture for millennia."

## Raising the Bar and Making a Difference

Organizations such as TED (for "Technology, Entertainment, Design"), as well as the independent TEDx events, have proven that well-crafted and engaging presentations can teach, persuade, and inspire. Progress is being made on the presentation front. However, on the whole, the majority of presentations in business and academia are still tedious affairs that fail to engage audiences, even though the content may be important and useful.

The bar is still relatively low when it comes to the quality of presentations, especially those given with the aid of multimedia. But this is not necessarily bad news—in fact, it is an opportunity. It's an opportunity for you to be different. You have important ideas that are worth sharing, so now is not the time to hesitate. If you look at the really successful and innovative companies and organizations around the world today, they are often the ones that celebrate individual and creative contributions. In that spirit, presenting your work and your great ideas is no time to be timid. Life is too short. If you want to change things—including the arc of your own career—then how you present yourself and your ideas matters a great deal. Why not be different?

*An audience—in this case, students—disconnected from the presenter and the message.*

*An audience engaged with the presenter and her message.*

# Presentations in the "Conceptual Age"

One of my favorite books is Daniel H. Pink's best-seller, *A Whole New Mind* (Riverhead Trade). This book was first published in 2006, but it is as relevant today as it was then. *A Whole New Mind* gives context to the Presentation Zen approach to presenting in today's world, an era that Pink and others have dubbed the Conceptual Age, where "high-touch" and "high-concept" aptitudes are first among equals. "The future belongs to a different kind of person," Pink says. "Designers, inventors, teachers, storytellers—creative and empathetic right-brain thinkers whose abilities mark the fault line between who gets ahead and who doesn't."

In *A Whole New Mind,* Pink paints a vivid picture of the threats and opportunities facing professionals. Pink claims we're living in a different era, a different age. This is an age in which those who "think different" will be valued even more than ever. According to Pink, we're living in an age that is "animated by a different form of thinking and a new approach to life—one that prizes aptitudes that I call 'high concept' and 'high touch.' High concept involves the capacity to detect patterns and opportunities, to create artistic and emotional beauty, to craft a satisfying narrative…."

Now, Pink is not saying that logic and analysis (so-called "left-brain reasoning"), which are so important in the Information Age, are not important in the Conceptual Age of today. Indeed, logical thinking is as important as it ever has been. "Right-brain reasoning" alone is not going to keep the International Space Station up or cure disease. Logical reasoning is a necessary condition. However, it's increasingly clear that logic alone is not a sufficient condition for success for individuals and organizations. Right-brain thinking is every bit as important now—in some cases, more important—than left-brain thinking. (The right-brain/left-brain distinction is a metaphor based on real differences between the two hemispheres; a healthy person uses both hemispheres for even simple tasks.)

Particularly valuable in *A Whole New Mind* are the "six senses" or the six "right-brain directed aptitudes," which Pink says are necessary for successful professionals to possess in the more interdependent world we live in, a world of increased automation and outsourcing.

The six aptitudes are: design, story, symphony, empathy, play, and meaning. Mastering and leveraging these aptitudes has become necessary for professional success and personal fulfillment in today's world. The introduction to the aptitudes that follows is written with multimedia-enhanced presentations in mind. But, you could take the six aptitudes and apply them to the art of game design, programming, product design, project management, health care, teaching, retail, and so on. The slide below summarizes six of the key points found in Pink's book.

*This is a slide I use when introducing the six aptitudes of Dan Pink's* A Whole New Mind.
*Slide was made using photo frames, tape, background, and images from Shutterstock.*

## Design

To many business people, design is something you spread on the surface, like icing on a cake. It's nice, but not mission critical. This is not design to me—it's decoration. Decoration, for better or worse, is noticeable. It is sometimes enjoyable and sometimes irritating, and it is unmistakably there. The best designs, however, are so well done that the observer never even consciously notices them. Think about the design of a book or the signage in an airport. We take note of the messages that the design helped make utterly clear, but not the color palette, typography, concept, etc.

Design starts at the beginning, not at the end—it's not an afterthought. If you use slideware in your presentation, the design of the visuals needs to begin in the preparation stage, before you even turn on your computer. During the preparation stage, you slow down and "stop your busy mind" so you can consider your topic, objectives, key messages, and audience. Only then will you begin to sketch out ideas that will appear in some digital visual form.

## Story

Facts, information, data. Most of it is available online or can be sent to people via e-mail, PDF, or hard copy through snail mail. Data and facts have never been more widely available. Cognitive scientist Mark Turner calls storytelling "narrative imagining," something that is a key instrument of thought. We are wired to tell and receive stories. We are all born storytellers (and "storylisteners"). As kids, we looked forward to show-and-tell, and we gathered with our friends at recess and lunchtime to tell stories about real things and real events that mattered, at least to us.

But somewhere along the line, "story" became synonymous with fiction or even falsehood. So story and storytelling have been marginalized in business and academia as something serious people do not engage in. But, from what college students tell me, I've concluded that the best and most effective professors are the ones who tell true stories and give real examples. From my students' point of view, the best professors don't just go through the material in a book. They put their own personality, character, and experiences into the material in the form of a narrative, which is illuminating, engaging, and memorable. Stories can be used for good—for teaching, sharing, illuminating, and, of course, honest persuasion.

## Symphony

Focus, specialization, and analysis have been important in the Information Age, but in the Conceptual Age, the ability to synthesize seemingly unrelated pieces to form and articulate the big picture is crucial—even a differentiator. Pink calls this aptitude "symphony."

The best presenters can illuminate relationships we may not have seen before. They can see the relationships between relationships. Symphony requires that we become better at seeing—truly seeing—in a new way. Anyone can deliver chunks of information and repeat findings that are represented visually by bullet points on screen. What we need are people who can recognize the patterns and are skilled at seeing the nuances and simplicity that may exist in a complex problem. Symphony in the world of presentation does not mean dumbing down information into the sound bites and talking points so popular in the mass media. Symphony is about applying our whole mind—logic, analysis, synthesis, intuition—to make sense of our world (that is, our topic), find the big picture, and determine what is important and what is not before the day of a talk. It's also about deciding what matters and letting go of the rest.

## Empathy

Empathy is about putting yourself in the position of others. It involves an understanding of the importance of others' nonverbal cues and being aware of your own. Good designers, for example, have the ability to put themselves in the position of the user, customer, or audience member. This is a talent, perhaps, more than a skill that can be taught—but everyone can get better at it. Empathy allows a presenter, even without thinking about it, to notice when the audience is "getting it" and when they are not. The empathetic presenter can make adjustments based on his or her reading of a particular audience.

## Play

In the Conceptual Age, says Pink, work is not just about seriousness, but about play as well. While each presentation situation is different, in many public speaking situations playfulness and humor can go a long way toward making a presentation palatable. Humor, in this sense, does not imply joking or clown-like informality, but rather, good, old-fashioned humor that leads to laughter. In Pink's book, Indian physician Madan Kataria points out that many think serious people are the best suited for business—that serious people are more responsible: "[But] that's not true. That's yesterday's news. Laughing people are more creative people. They are more productive people."

Somewhere along the line, we were sold the idea that a real business presentation or academic talk must be dull and devoid of humor—something to be endured, not enjoyed. And if you use multimedia tools, the more complicated, detailed, and difficult to see, the better. This approach is still alive and well today, but we can hope in the future that this, too, will become "yesterday's news."

*The best presenters—and the best teachers—use a spirit of play to engage their audience.*

## Meaning

Making a presentation is an opportunity to make a small difference in the world, whether it's in your community, company, or school. A presentation that goes badly may have a devastating impact on your spirit (and on your career). But a presentation that goes well can be fulfilling for both you and the audience, and it might even help your career. Some say that we "are born for meaning." We live for self-expression and an opportunity to share what we believe is important. If you are lucky, you're in a job that you feel passionate about. If so, then it's with excitement that you look forward to the possibility of sharing your expertise—your story—with others. Few things can be more rewarding than connecting with someone by teaching something new or sharing something you believe is very important with others.

Audiences are so used to so-called death-by-PowerPoint that they've seemingly learned to see it as normal, even if not ideal. However, if you are different—if you exceed expectations, show the audience that you've thought about them, done your homework, know your material, and demonstrated through your actions how much you appreciate being there—chances are you'll make an impact and a difference, even if it's just in the smallest of ways. There can be great meaning in even these small connections.

Design. Story. Symphony. Empathy. Play. Meaning. Dan Pink's *A Whole New Mind* gives us the context of the new world we're living in and explains why "high-touch" talents—which include exceptional presentation skills—are so important today. Professionals around the globe need to understand how and why the right-brain aptitudes of design, story, symphony, empathy, play, and meaning are more important than ever. The best presentations of our generation will be created by professionals—engineers as well as CEOs and creative types—who have strong "whole mind" aptitudes and talents. These are not the only aptitudes needed by the modern presenter, but mastering these talents along with other important abilities (such as strong analytical skills) will take you far as a communicator in the Conceptual Age.

*La Ciudad de las Ideas*

# Seth Godin

Speaker, blogger, and author of *This is Marketing*
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*Marketing guru and presenter extraordinaire Seth Godin says presentation is about the transfer of emotion.*

It doesn't matter whether you're trying to champion at a church or a school or a Fortune 100 company, you're probably going to use PowerPoint. PowerPoint was developed by engineers as a tool to help them communicate with the marketing department—and vice versa. It's a remarkable tool because it allows very dense verbal communication. Yes, you could send a memo, but no one reads anymore. As our compnies are getting faster and faster, we need a way to communicate ideas from one group to another. Enter PowerPoint.

PowerPoint could be the most powerful tool on your computer. But it's not. Countless innovations fail because their champions use PowerPoint the way Microsoft wants them to, rather than the right way.

Communication is about getting others to adopt your point of view, to help them understand why you're excited (or sad, or optimistic, or whatever else you are). If all you want to do is create a file of facts and figures, then cancel the meeting and send in a report.

Our brains have two sides. The right side is emotional, musical, and moody, whereas the left side is focused on dexterity, facts, and hard data. When you show up to give a presentation, people want to use both parts of their brains. So they use the right side to judge the way you talk, the way you dress, and your body language. Often, people come to a conclusion about your presentation by the time you're on the second slide. After that, it's often too late for your bullet points to do you much good. You can wreck a communication process with lousy logic or unsupported facts, but you can't complete it without emotion. Logic is not enough. Communication is the transfer of emotion.

Champions must sell—to internal audiences and to the outside world. If everyone in the room agreed with you, you wouldn't need to do a presentation, would you? You could save a lot of time by printing out a one-page project report and delivering it to each person. No, the reason we do presentations is to make a point, to sell one or more ideas.

If you believe in your idea, sell it. Make your point as hard as you can and get what you came for. Your audience will thank you for it, because deep down, we all want to be sold.

### How to Improve Immediately

First, make slides that reinforce your words, not repeat them. Create slides that demonstrate, with emotional proof, that what you're saying is true, not just accurate. No more than six words on a slide. EVER. There is no presentation so complex that this rule needs to be broken.

Second, don't use cheesy images. Use professional stock photo images. Talking about pollution in Houston? Instead of giving me four bullet points of EPA data, why not read me the stats but show me a photo of a bunch of dead birds, some smog, and even a diseased lung? This is cheating! It's unfair! It works.

Third, no dissolves, spins, or other transitions. Keep it simple.

Fourth, create a written document. A leave-behind. Put in as many footnotes or details as you like. Then, when you start your presentation, tell the audience that you're going to give them all the details of your presentation after it's over, and they don't have to write down everything you say. Remember, the presentation is to make an emotional sale. The document is the proof that helps the intellectuals in your audience accept the idea that you've sold them on emotionally.

Don't hand out printouts of your slides. They don't work without you there.

The home run is easy to describe: You put up a slide. It triggers an emotional reaction in the audience. They sit up and want to know what you're going to say that fits in with that image. Then, if you do it right, every time they think of what you said, they'll see the image (and vice versa). Sure, this is different from the way everyone else does it. But everyone else is busy defending the status quo (which is easy) and you're busy championing brave new innovations, which is difficult.

*Lyza Danger Gardner*

**Sample Slides**

*Here are a few sample slides from one of Seth's presentations. Without Seth, these visuals are almost meaningless. But with Seth's engaging narrative, the visuals help illuminate a memorable story.*